

Dear Jim,

4/16/74

I'm going into the Enquirer things separately, having just written you about leaning on Jimmy. Believe me, I'd rather be in bed!

I know enough about how these things work to know that they put together and represented as part of one interview what had to have come from the Jerry ploy.

I also have had a decent relationship with the fellow to whom I wrote. He is some kind of executive there.

He read me clearly, decided or knew I was right, and bucked the response to the lowest man he could. It was to me all the admission I needed. Under any other circumstances he would not have waited for his WATS lines to be available. He would have phoned me immediately. That he did not do this told me the same thing independently.

You will remember the semantics I emphasized for you, the single sentence in which he bracketed having a tape and a claim to accuracy. That also was all I needed, if I had had nothing else.

Maybe there are other clues I'm too tired to remember, like a reporter using a secretary for a letter or maybe 100 words. He could write it faster than he could find a free secretary.

So, as a courtesy to them and not to freeze what they did on paper, after making it clear enough between us I phoned him and spelled it out without any indirection.

We have to assume that Haile will make some effort to use this, whether or not knowing it not to be accurate and truthful. And the last thing we want to have to do is go through a whole long and public mess straightening it out in court. No matter how well we might do it it will still look very bad.

I am willing to assume that this is their regular practice, taking this kind of liberty for sensationalism. But I am by no means unaware of the kinds of pressures to which they are uniquely vulnerable from the federal government. (Aside from the owner's friendship with our Glorious Leader.)

So, I have given them to understand that there is no possibility that this will not be used by the state, no possibility of our not countering it with all the vigor we can, and no possibility of their not being hurt when this happens.

It should occur to them - and if it does not I'll help them a bit - that a simple letter of apology for the unfortunate consequences of journalistic haste in which two things, despite their traditional care and best intentions, got mixed up, can clean it all up with as little embarrassment to those who can be embarrassed as is now possible.

If this happens, and I believe it is possible, and Haile then uses it, it will hurt him not us and you can make the most indignant of lawyerlike orations about his failure to use due care, diligence and responsibility.

Before a jury you could even add that this has always been the way your client has been treated by officialdom.

If this does not work then I'll have a few suggestions for you to consider.

You should also know that the man who signed the story is not the one who interviewed James. He is some kind of sub-editor. The interviewer, South, is the one who wrote me.

Best,